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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the present high level of unemployment among young people in Great Britain and urges action by the Government to alleviate this problem by an immediate expansion in its regional policies. The creation of more employment through new industries and services is necessary to solve the chronic unemployment of development areas. Job training and job skills need to be provided for all youth; vocational training should not discriminate against young people or those unemployed. (EA)

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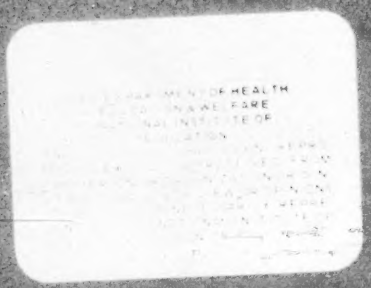

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The *Icon Series* is a series of occasional papers dealing with different aspects of the professional work of Careers Officers.

About unemployed young people is the second paper in the Series and has been prepared by the Standing Committee on Unemployment which was set up by the Institute in September 1971. The members of the Committee are Mr. J. S. Hooley (Chairman), Mr. C. P. Walton (Secretary), Mr. V. Ahier, Mr. C. J. Barker, Mr. A. H. Downward, Mr. G. C. Hogg, Mr. R. Hurst, Mr. D. B. Layton and Mr. B. Vallely.

ABOUT UNEMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE

"You know all that work in careers we did at school. It's just a big waste of time. And they never told us how to be unemployed".

This bitter comment of a County Durham youngster epitomises the particular evil of unemployment among young people. This paper does not infer that the unemployed family man has lesser problems. Nor is it argued that there is merit in preferential treatment for young people if this means fewer jobs for adults. But the Institute of Careers Officers—the professional organisation for the officers of the Youth Employment Service—is concerned about young people and so is particularly focussing attention on youth unemployment.

We live in a work-orientated society. For the majority, achievement in that society substantially derives from employment. Enforced idleness on leaving school or in the early years of working life is met by the individual in a variety of ways: resignation, discontent, anger, despair, anti-social behaviour. There is an inevitable diminution of pride and dignity.

There is more tangible diminution of income—unemployment benefit or social security allowance does not amount to as much as a wage packet. There is no chance of increasing by extra effort (except illegally) the amount of money which one has to spend. For the fifteen year old school leaver there is no money anyway: he is ineligible for unemployment benefit because he has not worked for 26 weeks in insurable employment and he is not old enough to draw supplementary benefit. So he has to depend on his parents—and in some areas of the United Kingdom it is likely that they too will be unemployed. If however he has stayed at school until he is over 16 he will be entitled to benefit—but unemployment is a poor reward for extra education. And to draw his money he will have to comply with procedures which are certainly not concerned with easing the transition from school to the outside world.

Much of the publicity about youth unemployment has highlighted the problem of school leavers getting jobs. But in many areas of the country the employment difficulties have not so seriously hit school leavers. A more permanent anxiety, which is almost universal, is the seventeen year old who persistently changes jobs in some localities and is out of work for long periods in others.

It is then a matter of serious concern that the Government's proposals "Training for the future" explicitly exclude young people from the Training Opportunities Scheme except in undefined special circumstances.

While the national situation affecting young people is now more serious than at any time since 1939, some parts of the country have experienced employment problems for many years. These areas (at present classified as Special Development Areas, Development Areas or Intermediate Areas but for convenience referred to in this paper simply as Development Areas) do not have the kind of industrial structure which will enable them to reap, in the short-term, any benefits resulting from economic expansion. They are struggling to attract sufficient jobs solely to replace those being lost through structural changes and contraction in their local industries. It is vitally important, therefore, that the employment problems of young people in these particular areas are not allowed to be forgotten when a relative improvement in the national situation takes place. The problems affecting young people in these areas are not only related to long-term unemployment and its consequences but also to an acute shortage of career choices, resulting in a serious misuse of potential among many of those who are employed.

Attention must be concentrated not only on the current unemployment situation but also on the persistent regional imbalance in the number of career opportunities available for young persons. A primary aim must be a more fairly balanced distribution of employment opportunities. The regional imbalance in the number of employment opportunities available for young persons has continued far too long.

The Government has announced its plans for regional incentives in the White Paper "Industrial and Regional Development". They contain powerful investment support for the regions to add to the 1972 Budget measures. The establishment of an Industrial Development Executive and the appointment of Mr. Christopher Chataway as the new Minister are greatly welcomed. But measures to stimulate industrial growth could be of a kind that do not significantly affect the employment problems of young people. We shall return to this later in the pamphlet.

Industrial training is also under review. The Government's proposals contained in "Training for the future" to set up a National Training Agency and a Training Opportunities Scheme are also very much to be welcomed. But again there are specific questions which must be asked about the effect on unemployed young people.

The problem

The Institute established a Standing Committee on Unemployment in September 1971, a time when the unemployment totals affecting young people were at their highest levels for over 40 years. The following table reflects the extent of the deterioration which has taken place in recent years:

Number of young persons unemployed in October

	Boys	Girls	Total
October 1971	39326	24332	63658
October 1970	23611	13652	37263
October 1969	19981	11428	31409
October 1968	17812	10205	28017

Unemployment among young people under 18 years in the autumn 1971 was about 75% higher than the previous year compared with an increase of about 45% among adults. The regional disparities in the situation are emphasised by the following table which gives the ratio of vacancies per 100 unemployed in certain regions:

Vacancies per 100 boys and girls: October 1968-71

	London & South East		Midlands		North West		North		Wales		Scotland	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
1971	141	338	49	92	24	58	14	26	28	36	13	29
1970	283	709	153	255	63	219	34	76	58	99	38	101
1969	365	847	289	481	99	324	31	117	56	99	82	237
1968	393	936	283	569	150	441	43	138	59	104	110	275

The most serious development in the present situation has been the increase in the numbers of young persons experiencing longer-term unemployment. In October 1971, 23388 young persons (15034 boys and 8354 girls) had been unemployed for over 8 weeks, compared with a total of 9377 (6271 boys and 3106 girls) in 1970. The problem of longer-term unemployment largely concerns those young people who have left school at the minimum statutory school leaving age, the majority of whom have previously been in the type of employment not normally associated with planned training.

A second feature of the present situation is even more disquieting. There has been much natural publicity about the million unemployed. In the period after the war there was a national policy of full employment. There were serious recessions in 1958/59 and in 1962/63. The scale of these crises was 460,000 and 550,000 unemployed respectively. Since 1967 the total figure has not fallen below half a million unemployed. If we succeeded in reducing the current figure by a half this would be reckoned to be a splendid recovery. But we should in fact be acquiescing in a normal level of unemployment which until 1963 was regarded as a major recession.

The comment of the Durham boy recurs. Should we then be educating people in how to be unemployed? And should we be developing a national strategy which plans for a reduction in employment opportunities?

In 1966 nearly 26 million people were in employment compared with just over 24 million today. The economic trends towards the creation of jobs in many industries in the 1960s have been largely reversed. Manufacturing industry alone has reduced its labour force by 7½% in the last five years.

The effects on employment of increases in productivity

The most significant trend during the past year and one which will inevitably have far-reaching effects on future employment is the rapid rise in productivity. In the nine months period ending in the autumn of 1971 output increased by only 1% but productivity went up by 5%. The industries that have shed most manpower have been those which have experienced the largest increases in productivity. For example, the engineering industry experienced a reduction of 6% in employment compared with the same period in 1967 but had a rise of 9% in output per head. The gas, electricity and water industries reduced their labour force by 5½% during the nine months to the autumn 1971 compared with 1967 but had an increase in productivity of 14½%. The largest proportional increases in unemployment have occurred in industries like iron and steel and mechanical engineering while those in consumer industries have experienced smaller increases.

These facts clearly emphasise the problems of those areas of the country which predominantly rely on capital intensive industries for employment and whose industrial structure as a whole is insufficiently diversified. It is inevitable, therefore, that a great deal of the Standing

Committee's attention has been concentrated on the acute unemployment problems of areas mainly affected by these developments. Consideration has been given to short-term measures which have been introduced to alleviate the present situation, and some comment now follows.

Training of unemployed young persons

It is significant that the short-term measures announced by the Government during 1971 were concentrated on reducing unemployment among young people by the introduction of various training schemes. The majority of training places under these schemes have been provided by Industrial Training Boards. Rather more than four thousand places were offered in Apprentice Award Schemes jointly financed by the Government and the Boards. Some three thousand eight hundred were filled.

There are a number of explanations for the short fall in taking up these places. The main scheme was in engineering. The Engineering Industry Training Board announced 3,000 places but not until the middle of August. The standard was of the normal craft and technical trainee and there is some evidence that the interviewing panels set up by the Board had a higher than average set of criteria in choosing boys. Certainly this was a scheme aimed at school leavers of average and above average ability, who, as has already been said, were not seriously at risk. The other schemes were smaller and were announced at a stage after the majority of school leavers were absorbed. None of the schemes were concentrated in the difficult areas of employment but were spread thinly throughout the country.

The Department of Employment has however developed the Government Vocational Training Scheme providing for seventeen year olds (as well as adults) a twelve week course which in a sense could be described as adjustment to the tools of trade—in engineering predominantly but also in office work and catering. This is initial training for semi-skilled work. The courses are based in colleges of further education or in employers' establishments, using surplus training capacity. Their existence is thus determined less by local need than by availability of training places.

The difficulty of introducing training schemes for young persons without a reasonable guarantee of employment is fully recognised. But these schemes are an important innovation. A signficant precedent has

now been created by their introduction. This is direct Government involvement for the first time since the war in the training of the young unemployed. It is now the responsibility of the community to ensure the fundamental right of the young unemployed to have access to suitable training opportunities. Training should be regarded not as a short-term palliative solely intended to reduce unemployment registers but as the only means of ensuring that unemployed young people are given the necessary skills to help them compete more equitably in the labour market.

Despite the problems of finding suitable employment for boys completing the 12 week courses, evidence from Careers Officers in those areas where such courses have been established suggests that those attending have greatly benefited. Most of the young people who have been involved left school at the minimum statutory school leaving age and had previously been employed in unskilled work. Apart from obtaining certain skills, attendance at the courses has re-created some self-discipline in the boys and has helped to give them more confidence, which rapidly deteriorates during spells of long-term unemployment.

These short term measures provide a refreshing alternative to the old apathetic attitude, of which too many people have in the past been guilty, that "nothing can be done about the employment situation except to sit back and wait". The situation in many areas is now so chronic that attention must be focussed on the need to formulate training policies for young workers while they are unemployed and not wait in hope that the unemployed will obtain employment linked with formal training. The education system in this country enables the more able person to develop his talents and abilities to the full. A similar system must be created within the labour market which will also allow the less able young worker who is at the greatest risk in the present situation to develop appropriate skills. There is no doubt that these young persons do possess potential for training and for developing skills: training officers responsible for the 12 week courses have openly confirmed the ability of the unemployed to acquire skills. These courses have therefore been welcome because they have helped to improve the image of the unemployed young person. In the past, it has been too easily assumed that the majority of the unemployed, being in the main in the non-examination group, were incapable of satisfying the requirements for training. This view has now been effectively challenged by experience and it is essential that the momentum now started in relation to training is speeded up and extended.

The future of the Apprentice Award Schemes

There is an urgent need for the Government to decide on the continuation of the Award Schemes by the Industrial Training Boards. Recognition must be given to the genuine fears which are being expressed by many Careers Officers that the placing of the present trainees could have serious detrimental effects on the apprenticeship placing prospects of 1972 school leavers. There are as yet insufficient grounds for assuming that the employment situation in many areas is going to improve to such an extent that adequate numbers of additional apprenticeship places are going to be created this year. In particular, openings in the heavy engineering sector of industry in some areas of the country are likely to again be curtailed, so making the placing of trainees into this sector of industry extremely difficult.

The Government must therefore be constantly pressed into deciding to continue the present Award Schemes. They should be available for school leavers and other suitable unemployed young people in 1972 and if necessary trainees at present undergoing training under the schemes should continue to be sponsored beyond this year if they are unable to be placed into employment. Any reduction in the training of skilled manpower can only, in the long-term, result in the rate of the nation's economic growth being retarded. A strong case can be made for the Award Schemes becoming a permanent feature of industrial training.

Training allowances for the unemployed

There is a need to examine the present system of training allowances being paid to unemployed young persons attending courses of training. The present practice of trainees being paid different allowances depending on whether they are sponsored by the Industrial Training Boards or by the Department of Employment has created unfair anomalies in some areas. Trainees attending twelve week courses are receiving Vocational Training Allowances from the Department of Employment with full reimbursement of fares and subsistence, while ITB trainees meet all expenses out of their flat-rate weekly allowance. The Government should pay all trainees the same level of allowance with reimbursement of all expenses.

"Training for the future"

Mention has been made of the review of industrial training which the Secretary of State for Employment has initiated. This pamphlet is

not the place in which to discuss in detail the document "Training for the future". There are however some features of the proposals which cause anxiety.

The main shortcoming of the present short-term provision both in the Apprentice Award Scheme and in the Government Vocational Training Scheme is the scale with which these schemes are being developed.

"Training for the future" admits that there is an urgent need for expansion and proposes a Training Opportunities Scheme which aims to provide by 1975 an output of 60/70,000 trainees a year, a fourfold increase in five years. This substantial programme is marred by a serious restriction. It is intended that nobody should be admitted to the scheme unless there has been an interval of say three years after leaving full time education.

The scheme is a re-training scheme for men and women who wish to acquire skills. But it is of fundamental importance that a young man or woman who is unemployed should be trained as quickly as possible. It is well understood that the Training Opportunities Scheme is not designed to provide initial training; at the same time it is crucial that young people should not be required to serve their time in unemployment or in stop-gap miscellaneous employment until they are qualified by the three year interval after full time education.

The Government's doubts about the Industrial Training Boards have also to be questioned. The Boards which were quickly established in industries with a long tradition of training have in the main been effective innovators. But many Boards are only now beginning to get to grips with the problems of the industries which have set them up. The disappearance of levy grant is likely to be a disincentive to training especially in less progressive industries, and the scale of Government finance is unlikely to match the needs which have been established. There is serious danger that off-the-job training will significantly decline outside the training centres of sizeable firms. Group training schemes which particularly benefit young people employed in small firms are to an extent in jeopardy.

The setting up of a National Training Agency is a very worthwhile proposal. It is essential that it has adequate resources.

"Industrial and regional development"

The White Paper issued by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry contains important proposals, setting out a strategy which it is hoped will bring new life and work to the regions. The establishment

of an Industrial Development Executive with regional directors in Billingham, Bootle, Cardiff and Glasgow is a particularly satisfactory innovation.

There are however certain reservations which have to be expressed. The proposals to increase the allowances for people to move home suggest some doubt about the effectiveness with which development will take place. The reference to the discontinuance of the Regional Employment Premium is a further indication of failure to recognise the need to give special help to the Development Areas not merely with investment but in support of labour intensive manufacturing.

The Government has decided to abolish the differential incentive favouring Development Areas in depreciation allowances for machinery and plant. This change of policy will need careful review because the system of cash grants which will replace previous regional incentives is not simply geared to encourage extra employment.

The White Paper's proposals on Industrial Development Certificates give cause for concern and should be rejected if, as appears to be the case, the lifting of exemption limits militates against the diversion of industry to Development Areas.

One of the most urgent needs in some of the Development Areas is for more office employment. It is estimated that 1 in 5 of the country's working population is now employed in office work and that one half of this total work in the London and South East region. It is also estimated that about 4,500 new office jobs could be created by the Government alone each year in these areas at a cost of about £7 million, an infinitesimal amount compared with the total cost of regional policies as a whole. This is one sphere where the Government could directly help by decentralising its own administration, thereby helping to create a more diversified employment structure in some areas.

Some areas within Development Regions have comparatively low office employment opportunities and have been trying for very many years to get the Government to transfer or set up some of its own Departments locally. It is therefore disturbing that the Government has recently announced a decision to close one of its establishments in one of the Development Areas. The Royal Naval Distribution Centre in Teesside is to be transferred to Worcestershire, involving a loss of nearly 1,000 white collar jobs to the Teesside and South Durham area. This area already has one of the lowest percentage rates of girls entering office employment and with increasing numbers reaching

school leaving age in the next few years, the need is for a rapid expansion in employment of this kind, not a deliberate contraction. The social consequences of such decisions for the areas affected should receive much more priority than they appear to be doing at present.

Training Grants Scheme

The Department of Employment operates a scheme under which employers in Development Areas are given financial incentives through capital grants or annual training grants if they create new and additional training places for young persons. The base date for determining additional places is 1st January 1968, a year when intake into apprenticeships in Development Areas was comparatively high. It is probable that future intakes of young people into occupations in the industrial sector which involve planned training will not return to the levels experienced between 1967 and 1970 for some time, if ever.

In order to assist employers in Development and Intermediate Areas to maintain and increase the number of training opportunities it is considered that a change in the base date appropriate under the present scheme is now urgently required. The Institute has therefore made representations to the Department of Employment about this matter and has been informed that this particular scheme is at present being reviewed. Any change in the base date for determining new or additional places will become operative from January 1973. The important point is to ensure that the base date for determining aid to employers under the scheme is changed from January 1968 to January 1972, to take account of the lower intakes into apprenticeships and other training occupations compared with 1967-1970. It is crucial that every possible incentive is given to employers in the hardest hit regions to at least maintain levels of training opportunities for both boys and girls suitable for this type of work. Otherwise the effect of a contraction in employment openings in this sphere for the more able young person will be to make the unemployment position of the less able even more difficult.

Other measures

The Committee has given detailed consideration to other matters which have a direct relation to the employment of young people. These have included the effects of shift working and productivity deals, a shorter working week and an earlier retirement age. The Committee has also considered the implications of the "Community Industry

Scheme" to be administered by the National Association of Youth Clubs. This scheme is to be short-term initially. There is no doubt that opportunities for permanent employment do exist in some areas with local authorities who are primarily responsible for "environmental" work. If work is to be created in this sector with Government assistance, consideration should be given to the possibility of giving local authorities in some of the hardest hit areas specific financial grants to be used solely for employing, in a permanent capacity, unemployed young people.

Appointment of additional careers officers

The Committee has welcomed the decision of the Central Youth Employment Executive to approve the appointment of additional Careers Officers in certain areas of high unemployment. It has been felt for some time that the work of the Service with the unsettled and unemployed has been restricted because of inadequate professional staffing resources. It is now hoped that the Central Youth Employment Executive will always have regard to the levels of unemployment in an area when considering proposals on staffing and will regard this factor as being at least as important as, for instance, the number of immigrants in an area.

Action by careers officers and youth employment committees

Individual Careers Officers have done much during the past year to publicise the difficulties at present affecting young people. The Institute has been pleased to have evidence of steps which have been taken by individual Youth Employment Committees in making representations to the Government. It may be, of course, that some of the representations have been about the particular problems of certain areas. Nevertheless, these actions are important in achieving concerted action and the Institute strongly supports them.

A new approach to the problems of the unemployed

The Committee accepts that the problems of unemployment affecting young people at the present time are the result of the general economic situation and of other factors which are having a direct effect on the levels of employment generally. While the total level of unemployment may be reduced in the next year or two, it is difficult to

predict with any certainty at what level unemployment will be considered to have reached an acceptable "average". There seems little doubt, however, that the national average percentage of unemployment in the future will remain higher than the levels experienced in the 1960s. This will inevitably mean that the rate of unemployment in some of the Development, and probably Intermediate, Areas will continue to remain at socially unacceptable levels.

The implications for young people, and in particular for the less able and uncertificated, are extremely serious. Therefore, the Committee considers that an "agonising re-appraisal" of the approach of Government to the problem of the young unemployed is now imperative. Emphasis needs to be directed to long-term factors, involving a new approach to training as a whole, and away from short-term palliatives to meet emergency situations. To allow young people to compete in the labour market in future without a skill which they can sell is to encourage them to commit economic suicide. An expansion in training opportunities is urgently needed to form an integral part of manpower planning and re-training for the future. All available training facilities should be utilised and, if necessary, quotas of places in Government Training Centres reserved for young people or special annexes built. The Government, or the National Training Agency, should be empowered to sponsor all unemployed young people under training, for an indeterminate period if necessary or for the normal length of an apprenticeship period, where relevant. The Committee would welcome any expansion in the Government training programme as a whole. More of the nation's resources need to be devoted to the training and re-training of the unemployed. Compared with the United States, where the recent Budget allocation towards the cost of training the unskilled and re-training the unemployed totalled five billion dollars, this country's contribution of £25 million towards the cost of Government financed training is proportionately niggardly.

"People and jobs"

Mention must be made of the Government's proposals in the document "People and jobs" to modernise the Employment Service. Because of the important role which an efficient and effective state employment service can fulfil in the social and economic policy of the Government, the Committee welcomes steps which have this objective. They include, however, the particular implication that young workers once they have entered the labour market should become the main responsibility of the Department of Employment; but young people, in areas of high unemployment in particular, need the continuing concern

of Careers Officers whose special skill is the understanding of the adolescent. Unemployed adolescents particularly need this special skill and will be less well served by over burdened offices of the Employment Service with their queues of unemployed adults.

The concern of the Institute in the present unemployment situation is with its effect on all young people. It is impossible to consider the training needs of an unemployed school leaver separately from those of the young person who has previously been employed. Similarly, it is impossible to consider the difficulties of the present situation and consequent loss of job opportunities for young people based on an irrelevant demarcation. Many Careers Officers have developed special interests in the problems of unemployed young people. To deprive the Service of the opportunity of developing these interests among its staff, which can only be cultivated by means of continuous contact with the young unemployed, would be an ill-considered move resulting in inefficient deployment of staffing skills.

Conclusion

A young man or woman who has the ability and parental support to go to university has a slice of the educational cake worth £5,000. A boy or girl who leaves school at 15 has a slice worth £1,300. Both kinds of young people have parallel if different needs for personal development. It is surely indefensible that one category can be a legitimate charge on the community into adulthood, while another category, more vulnerable because less qualified, may have its chances of development substantially hindered by the accidents of economics.

There needs to be a revolution in thinking about the responsibilities of the community to all young people. The Institute in its document about a Young Worker's Charter issued in 1966 declared its belief that all young people should be treated as trainees. This belief has particular relevance when there is widespread unemployment, both among school leavers and among seventeen and eighteen year olds. It will have continuing relevance as technological change diminishes the occupational opportunities for the less able.

Summary and recommendations

(a) The present high level of unemployment among young people is a national disgrace and requires urgent action by the Government to help alleviate the frustrating effects of this problem on young people.

(b) The Government should introduce an immediate expansion in its regional policies. The only solution to the chronic unemployment situation in Development Areas is the creation of more employment through completely new industries and services. The Government should take the following action:—

(i) Continue the Regional Employment Premium which it has announced will be terminated in 1974 and consider extending the scheme to service employers in Development Areas.

(ii) Implement a vigorous policy in the granting of Industrial Development Certificates which makes sure that potential developers are diverted to Development Areas rather than allowed to build or expand in the comparatively affluent areas of the country.

(iii) Change the base date from January 1968 to January 1972 in the Scheme which gives grants to employers in Development Areas who create new or additional training places.

(iv) Establish more Government Departments in the regions so creating more office employment opportunities.

(v) Retain Government establishments in Development Areas until adequate alternative employment opportunities have been created in the area.

(vi) Have regard to the needs of the Development Areas in this country when approving any expansion of productive capacity being planned by the British Steel Corporation or any other body, public or private.

(c) A completely new approach is needed to the question of training the young worker. All young people should have the right to be trained and the right to acquire appropriate skills. The effects of increasing efficiency in industry is likely to continue to have long-term implications on future employment trends. To allow young people without skills to compete in the labour market is to condone their economic suicide.

The vocational training of young people in the labour market should cease to be regarded as something which has to be confined to those in employment. The Government should expand the policy of sponsoring the training of unemployed young people, through the National Training Agency if necessary, and the training should be for an indeterminate period, where appropriate, including the full length of a normal apprenticeship with trades union agreement.

(d) The present Apprentice Award Schemes which are being run by the Industrial Training Boards should become a permanent feature of the industrial training system.

(e) The Government has begun a survey of surplus training capacity in the country. This should be maintained with vigour and imagination.

(f) The projected Training Opportunities Scheme should be revised so that there is not the restrictive provision which discriminates against young people.

(g) All unemployed young people attending training courses should receive the same level of allowances with full reimbursement of expenses.

(h) The Youth Employment Service should continue to be strengthened to enable it to devote more of its resources to the needs of the unemployed. In determining the ratio of professional staff to be allocated to the Service the Central Youth Employment Executive should always have regard to the level of unemployment in a particular area.

Further information. The Institute of Careers Officers is the professional organisation of Careers Officers in the Youth Employment Service. Membership is open to all those, individuals or organisations, who are interested in careers work and further information about its activities and publications can be obtained from:—

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